

June 1, 2012

Volume 2012, Edition 3



**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE...**

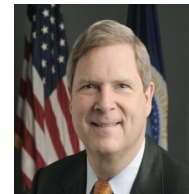
<i>A Message from the Secretary</i>	1
<i>Cultural Diversity Event</i>	1
<i>Mississippi Success Story</i>	2
<i>Maine Success Story</i>	2
<i>HOTLAW</i>	3
<i>Defining It!</i>	3
<i>Director's Corner</i>	3

CIVIL RIGHTS CHRONICLE

A Message from Secretary Tom Vilsack



USDA held a special recognition event hosted by Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski of MSNBC's "Morning Joe". USDA also welcomed NFL stars Art Monk and LaVar Arrington, Rolling Stones keyboardist Chuck Leavell, and several current and former USDA employees to help highlight the work of the Department.



"In 2012, USDA will commemorate and celebrate the 150th anniversary of our founding in 1862, when President Abraham Lincoln signed into law an act of Congress establishing the United States Department of Agriculture.

Two and one-half years later, in what would be his final annual message to the Congress, Lincoln called USDA "The People's Department." At that time, about half of all Americans lived on farms, compared with about 2 percent today. But through our work on food, agriculture, economic development, science, natural resource conservation and a host of issues, USDA still fulfills Lincoln's vision - touching the lives of every American, every day.

As we commemorate 150 years of accomplishments, USDA is learning from past experiences and looking to the future. In the years to come, we must help address the changing needs of

agriculture and rural America. We must continue to help provide a safe, ample food supply for our nation and the world. To meet those goals, we are working to make USDA a more modern and effective service provider and to deliver the best possible results for all of the American people.

Over the course of the year, I hope that Americans will acknowledge and join in our commemoration of 150 years of USDA. It is a great time to learn about our contributions to the strength and health of this nation, and to see how we can continue to partner with Americans working to provide a better life for their families.

" Thanks for joining us in this celebration, Secretary Vilsack



**CULTURAL
DIVERSITY**

NRCS First Cultural Diversity Event

By Michael Coates, Executive Assistant, Regional Conservationist Office

NRCS held its first Cultural Diversity event on April 3, 2012, which showcased the various cultural differences among agency employees. The Cultural Diversity Event theme was "Celebrating many cultures, many communities, ONE world". Various exhibits that represent cultures from seven different continents were featured and displayed cultural information, fun facts, and food. To provide a more authentic feel, participants were given a passport to be stamped as they visited each continent exhibit. It was a great learning experience for all NRCSers.

There was an abundant of senior level support for the event! Secretary Vilsack joined in the activities by visiting and chatting with employees, and exploring the exhibits. Alma Hobbs, USDA Associate Assistant Secretary for Administration provided opening remarks; Leonard Jordan, NRCS East Regional Conservationist, introduced the keynote speaker, Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources & Environment; and NRCS Chief, Dave White, provided closing remarks. In addition, there was



Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources & Environment Ann Mills, Chief Dave White and members of the Cultural Diversity Team

a Q&A panel discussion held by several NRCS officials: Diane Gelburd, Special Assistant to the Chief; Noller Herbert, Director, Conservation Engineering Division; and Jimmy Bramblett, Chief of staff, Office of the Regional Conservationists.

The event was a success and as we continue to celebrate our many cultures, we should also take the time to learn more about them. Making a change is making a difference. For more information on USDA Cultural Transformation initiatives, you may visit <http://culturaltransformation.usda.gov/>.



Secretary Tom Vilsack, Lashawn Guion and Michael Coates



Cultural Diversity Team

NRCS Civil Rights Division Civil Rights Compliance Review Success Stories

“People’s Garden Feeds Hundreds of Families in Need”



Canton, Miss. – A People’s Garden in central Mississippi has fed hundreds of impoverished families with fresh fruits and veggies, and more food is on the way, the garden’s organizers say. “I am looking forward to our fall garden after our summer garden was so successful,” said Harold Waldrop, who heads the garden for the Madison Counties Allied Against Poverty (MadCAAP). “It’s helping others. That’s what it’s all about.” So far, 500 tomato plants in the Helping Hands Garden have produced more than 1,000 pounds of tomatoes. About 515 pounds of tomatoes were harvested in June. Also in June, 227 pounds of zucchini, 227 pounds of cucumber, 62 pounds of okra, 322 pounds of squash, 26 pounds of eggplant, 243 pounds of potatoes, 17 pounds of bell peppers and 46 pounds of peas were harvested. “We have had a very good year,” Waldrop said. The garden was established this year in Canton on a vacant lot. The garden has 8 raised beds, and other tilled areas that are growing a variety of vegetables. MadCAAP received a grant through the Mississippi Food Network through Blue

Cross Blue Shield Mississippi to fund part of the garden. MadCAAP has used the money wisely to ensure the garden is a sustainable effort that will persist for future years. In February, our site was simply a weed-filled vacant lot, but in a matter of months, it has been transformed into a flourishing garden that is making a tangible difference in the lives of our clients,” said Judy Miller, project coordinator for the garden. “Now that is truly amazing.” Volunteers tend to the garden 10-12 hours a week, picking, planting, tilling and other tasks to keep the garden in tip-top shape. About 40 volunteers, from church groups and area businesses, have worked at the garden since it was planted in March. The vegetables are distributed several times a week at MadCAAP office, which also provides clothes and other necessities to low income families. One of the volunteers was Stephanie Gunn, who has visited MadCAAP for assistance. “I’ve enjoyed it. It was a different experience. I’ve never worked in the garden before. I really like working here, and if I had a house I would plan stuff,” Gunn said. Carolyn Rainey, a loyal volunteer to the cause, said the MadCAAP garden provides a healthy component to the diets of many. The garden fed 700 people in June. “It’s a blessing. This garden has grown some delicious food,” Rainey said. “You can just eat a tomato off the vine. It doesn’t need salt or pepper.”

Maine Holds Third Embracing Unity and Diversity Day

Feb 16th, 2012 marked the third and final Embracing Unity and Diversity Day in Maine. Two sessions were held simultaneously in central and southern Maine and were the continued joint endeavor of the NRCS and FSA Civil Rights Committee to introduce employees to different cultures and special emphasis groups. Throughout the three years, employees had the opportunity to learn more about the eight different special emphasis areas on a rotating basis. The central Maine session was opened with the National Anthem performed by the Army National



Guard Band Ensemble. The topics of presentations and discussions

Maine Diversity Day – Christine Chou, Author of “A Chinese Woman’s thoughts on American Culture” talks about the differences between Chinese and American cultures.



The southern Maine session included presentations and discussions on the following topics: Honoring the Past in Today’s World; Penobscot Indian Nation Language History; Diversity of Countries, Latino Populations and Immigrants in the Workforce; and Life as an Immigrant from the Dominican Republic to the US and the Role of Art in the Caribbean.

Maine State Conservationist, Juan Hernandez, thanked the Civil Rights Committee for their hard work in making these events happen. This was the culmination of three years of effort, and that was evident in the outstanding programs. NRCS Maine was recognized by Congresswoman Chellie Pingree for their outstanding Diversity Day Event and also for educating her staff on diversity within the workplace. Congresswoman Pingree stated “she counts on her staff to share information with her that not only informs her policy priorities and decisions, but also keeps her connected to the people and communities she serves”. A member of her staff stated that there were a lot of great speakers and that a good time was had by all.



Maine Diversity Day – Carl Perry, Program Assistant with NRCS in Maine, passes on information on how to understand your Veteran customers and the Veteran subculture in America.



Maine Diversity Day - Sharon Nance, National GLBT SEPM from NRCS in California, shares information on Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgenderers.



Maine Diversity Day – Cara Clark, Visual Specialist with NRCS in Illinois, tells of the challenges and triumphs as a person with a disability.

were: Differences between Chinese and American Culture; Challenges and Rewards from a Female’s Political Perspective, presented by four female congressional representatives; Understanding Your Veteran Customer; The Underground Railroad; Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgender; and Challenges and Triumphs as a Person with a Disability.

FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN



July 16 — 20, 2012
Detroit Michigan



HOTLAW

AWOL, supervisor's pressure to withdraw claims lead to \$10K award

Riddick v. Department of Veterans Affairs, 111 LRP 74311 (EEOC OFO11/18/11)

Ruling: The Department of Veterans Affairs subjected a nurse to reprisal when it charged her with eight hours of absence without leave and a supervisor pressured her to withdraw her claims, entitling her to \$10,000 in non-pecuniary damages.

What it means: Reinstatement is not proper remedy for an agency's discriminatory conduct when it places the complainant in a better position she would have been absent discrimination.

Summary: A registered nurse for the Department of Veterans Affairs alleged that the agency subjected her to discrimination and harassment based on reprisal for prior protested EEO activity.

The administrative judge found the agency subjected her to reprisal when she was charged with absence without leave and a supervisor pressured her to withdraw her claims. The agency accepted the AJ's findings of discrimination but rejected the AJ's remedies. The agency argued that the AJ's award of \$35,000 in non-pecuniary damages was not supported by evidence. The AJ found the reprisal exacerbated the nurse's stress and depression, which caused her to self-medicate. She said she was embarrassed and humiliated about testing positive for cocaine and being removed. The EEOC

found that \$10,000 was consistent with precedent, not "monstrously excessive," and not the product of passion or prejudice.

The agency argued that reinstatement was improper. The EEOC agreed, finding that reinstatement would place the nurse in a better position than she would have been absent discrimination. The nurse was terminated for being under the influence of an illegal drug while on duty. The AJ found this was not discriminatory. Therefore, the AJ's decision to reinstate the nurse was reversed.

"I began to have grandiose ideas of everyone saying 'just CR me'."
-Gregory Singleton,
NRCS, CRD Civil Rights Director

Defining It!

Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is the repeated and unwanted actions by an individual or group intending to intimidate, harass, degrade or offend. It is also the abuse or misuse of power and psychological violence.

The effects of bullying on the **INDIVIDUAL** are:

- Anger
- Feeling of frustration and/or helplessness
- Increased sense of vulnerability
- Loss of confidence

The effects of bullying on the **WORKPLACE** are:

- Absenteeism
- Manifestation of illness
- Decreased productivity and morale
- Increased accidents on the job and
- High turnover and violence



NRCS CRD Director's Corner

A word from the desk of Gregory Singleton, Director, NRCS Civil Rights Division

Words are powerful. They tell our story. They attempt to get our point across with passion. However, they can also hurt, tear down, destroy and cause walls to be built up where there are none. So let me share with you, words that I cannot take any credit for, but words that are truly significant to the mission of NRCS.

"We must embrace the goals of "Culture Transformation" as expressed by Secretary Vilsack. On August 29, 2011, I sent an email message to all NRCS employee's titled "What is Cultural Transformation" and it was followed in September, by an agency-wide training entitled "Starting the Cultural Transformation Conversation." As I renew my commit-

ment and the expectation of the agency to be committed to equal opportunity and civil rights, it is imperative to remind everyone that the core values of cultural transformation include of the principles of equal opportunity and civil rights. As such, I am incorporating Cultural Transformation as part of the NRCS Civil Rights policy. All NRCS employees are expected to model equal opportunity, civil rights, and cultural transformation, and managers and supervisors must demonstrate an elevated regard by supporting civil rights, equal; employment opportunity, diversity, and cultural transformation. The Civil Rights Division will continue to provide guidance and ensure the agency's compliance with the laws and principles of equality for employment and programs. NRCS can achieve and maintain a diverse

workforce with an abundance of opportunities for every employee to reach his or her full potential. We can also achieve our critical mission of providing assistance and service to conserve our Nation's natural resources, but it requires every employee's cooperation and commitment. I have every confidence that you will take this responsibility seriously and do your part to renew and champion our commitment to equal opportunity, civil rights, and cultural transformation." Chief Dave White

Those words are our Title Page, Table of Contents, Preface, Text, Core Content, Glossary and Index. Those words tell the NRCS story. They are in many ways the first indication, employees, customers and our partner's get, of who we are, how we think and how we operate. As with all good stories, if the words are good, so too will be the ending.

-Gregory Singleton

DID YOU KNOW?



CRD is on the Web!

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/about/civilrights>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TAR-GET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD.)

*To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll free at 866.632.9992 (English); 800.877.8339 (TDD) ;

866.377.8642 (English Federal-relay) or 800.845.6136 (Spanish Federal-relay)

*For the Program Discrimination Complaint form and instructions, visit the NRCS CRD website.



Civil Rights Division

VISION:

To be an inclusive diverse and equitable Agency that delivers programs in a manner based on and consistent with fairness availability and accountability.

MISSION:

To be an inclusive, diverse and equitable Agency that delivers programs in a manner based on and consistent with fairness, equality, availability and accountability while ensuring that applicants and employees are treated with respect, dignity and free from discrimination.

NRCS Civil Rights Division

Name	Position	Phone
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE		
Gregory Singleton	Director	301-504-2180
Taledia Washington	Administrative Assistant	301-504-2182
Employment Compliance Team		
Sandra M. McWhirter	Supervisory Team Leader	301-504-2198
Anita Holland-Spears	Management Analyst	301-504-0026
Elton Loud	EEO Specialist	301-504-2332
Nettie Moment	EEO Specialist	301-504-2164
Kimberly Rodgers (Detailed)	EEO Specialist	301-504-2279
Barbara Taylor	EEO Specialist	301-504-2185
Program Compliance Team		
Samora Bennerman-Johnson	Supervisory Team Leader	301-504-2286
Elvin Gant	EO Specialist	301-504-2173
Wytonya Jackson	EO Specialist	301-504-2166
Sheila Shepperd	EO Specialist	301-504-2457